

WHITE PAPER

From Activity to Impact: A Practical Approach to Demonstrating Medical Affairs Value Through Impact Metrics.



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Executive Summary

Medical Affairs teams often struggle to demonstrate their full strategic value by relying heavily on activity-based metrics rather than outcomes-oriented impact metrics.

Key insights:

1. Shifting from counting activities to measuring real-world impact better aligns Medical Affairs with strategic enterprise goals.
2. Thoughtfully designed impact metrics enable timely strategic adjustments and drive cross-functional alignment.
3. Emerging advanced analytics and AI-driven tools are enabling precise, predictive, and actionable demonstration of Medical Affairs value.

Leveraging Putnam's extensive experience with biopharmaceutical clients, this white paper provides practical, actionable guidance to help Medical Affairs leaders select, implement, and communicate impactful metrics. We present a pragmatic framework that enables Medical Affairs teams to position themselves as strategic drivers of patient outcomes, healthcare improvements, and overall organizational success, and ensure readiness for the era of Precision Medical Affairs.



Introduction

In today's data-driven pharmaceutical landscape, Medical Affairs teams are increasingly expected to demonstrate their value with clarity, precision, and strategic relevance. Yet many organizations still rely heavily on activity-based frequency metrics. For example, counts of MSL interactions, insights collected, or materials disseminated.¹ While useful for operational visibility and internal planning, these descriptives often fall short in capturing the real-world, dynamic, and strategic impact of Medical Affairs.

As Medical Affairs capabilities continue to evolve, there is greater potential to demonstrate progress on metrics directly linked to patient outcomes, societal health impacts, and broader healthcare ecosystem improvements. Looking ahead, future metrics frameworks are likely to incorporate advanced and AI-driven analytics, including predictive modeling and real-time feedback loops, enabling more timely, relevant, and actionable demonstration of value.

There is a need for a practical, experience-driven guide to designing and implementing meaningful impact metrics. Leveraging Putnam's extensive experience with biopharmaceutical clients, we present a pragmatic framework that enables Medical Affairs teams not only to capture the strategic value of their activities today but also anticipate and prepare for the evolving expectations around demonstrating real-world impact in the future.



From Operations to Influence: the Changing Sphere of Medical Affairs

Medical Affairs has long served as a vital bridge between science and medicine – a positive force for both the pharmaceutical industry and society at large. From shaping clinical understanding to elevating standards of care to identifying and addressing unmet needs, Medical Affairs contributes meaningfully to a wide range of stakeholders, including patients, providers, payers, and policymakers.

Despite its pivotal role across the ecosystem, the impact of Medical Affairs has been difficult to convey. This is partially due to the non-commercial nature of measuring and communicating value and performance. Commercial counterparts have more readily translatable approaches to demonstrating real-world change (e.g., sales volume, market share). However, Medical Affairs is contingent on the human factor: measuring impact on patient and public health outcomes through changes in physician and patient behavior, which is a complex measurement requiring a multi-dimensional, nuanced approach.

Medical Affairs also plays a critical role in guiding cross-functional activities throughout the product lifecycle, from preclinical development to market readiness and long-term value realization. It is therefore imperative that the impact of Medical Affairs teams is effectively captured and communicated to organizational leaders, stakeholders, and peers across the industry. As the function continues to expand its reach and responsibilities, Medical Affairs leaders need to articulate and measure their impact in clear, credible, and actionable terms.

Impact metrics present a compelling opportunity to measure the true value of Medical Affairs by focusing on outcomes rather than outputs (Exhibit 1). While all functional areas play an invaluable role in bringing critical therapeutics to market, Medical Affairs leaders and teams are exceptionally tasked to consider the patient first. Unlike traditional activity-based operational and internal metrics, impact metrics focus on measuring external, stakeholder-centric results. The central question shifts from an operational "What did we do?" toward the more strategic and impactful "What did we achieve?".

EXHIBIT 1. OPERATIONAL VS. IMPACT METRICS

Operational Metric		Impact Metrics
Number of KOL visits, interactions, advisory boards, etc.	➤	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in satisfaction with interactions and overall reputation of company• Increase in KOL knowledge
Number and speed of medical informational requests resolved	➤	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in KOL adherence to guidelines• Improvements in patient health
Number of abstracts and publications submitted	➤	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase in altimetric score• Increase in scientific and digital share of voice at congresses
No equivalent in operational metrics	➤	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improvements in diagnosis and treatment rates, decrease in disease burden• Reduction in unmet needs and closing care gaps

The Value of Impact Metrics in Medical Affairs

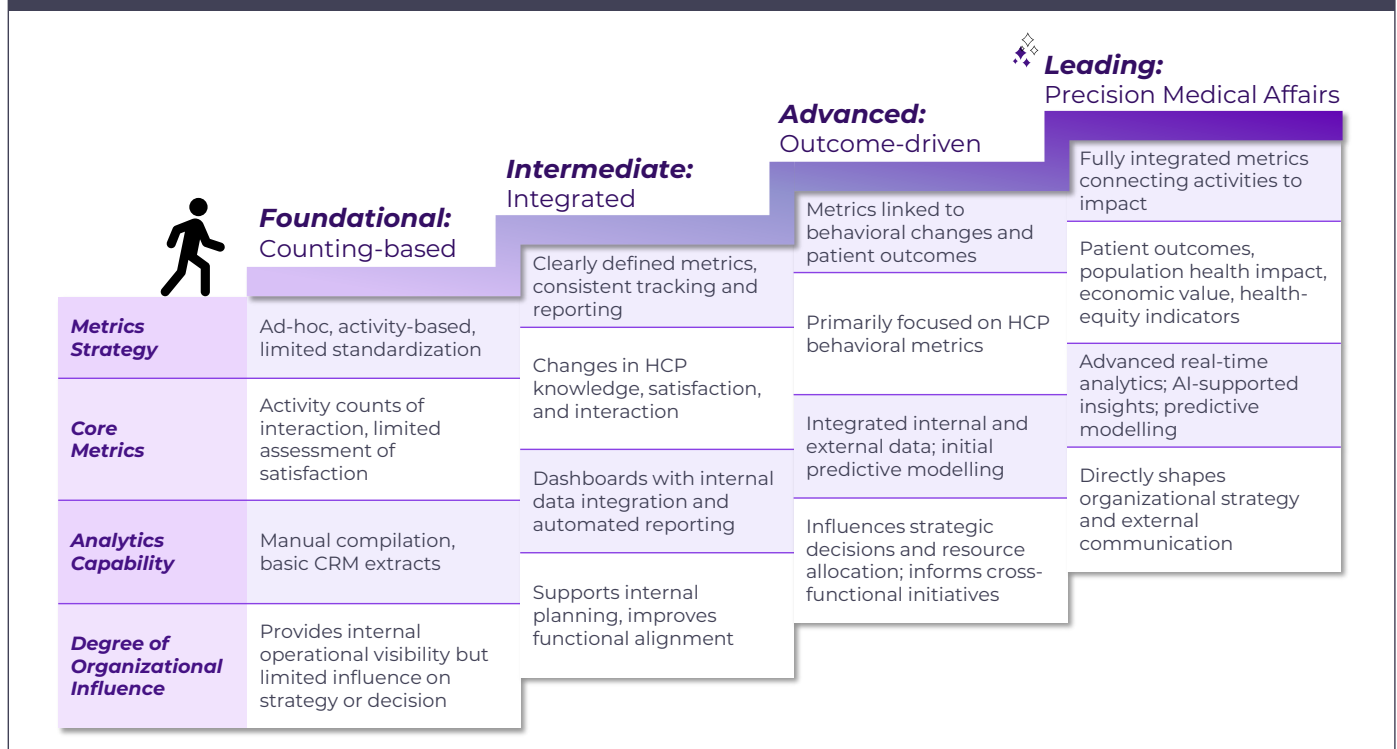
Impact metrics enable Medical Affairs to demonstrate value clearly and compellingly, aligning their activities to strategic, enterprise-level priorities. Unlike traditional operational metrics, which often lack the strategic context required to capture executive attention, impact metrics explicitly illustrate Medical Affairs' contributions to critical organizational goals; from market readiness to tangible patient outcomes. By capturing the complex dynamics of real-world healthcare delivery, robust impact metrics not only validate the strategic role of Medical Affairs but also strengthen the function's case for ongoing resources and investment.

Impact metrics also allow course correction when the right set of impact metrics are chosen. Because real-world impact often takes time to materialize, a set of intentionally selected impact metrics offer a way to assess progress along the journey to greater impact. This allows teams to adjust strategies based on real-time feedback rather than waiting for post-hoc evaluation and demonstrate ongoing success towards larger changes.

The act of designing impact metrics also fosters greater intra-functional and cross-functional alignment. Co-designing impact metrics enables multi-disciplinary teams to create a shared framework and develop a common language across functions, enabling Medical Affairs to connect its work to the goals of Commercial, Clinical, Access, and other internal stakeholders. This alignment helps to ensure that impact measurement reflects collective priorities and drives cohesive strategic planning across functions.

Leading Medical Affairs organizations are already moving beyond traditional productivity metrics, shifting the focus from activity to impact. This evolution addresses a persistent gap in how the function's value is understood - ensuring it is seen not merely as reactive, but as a strategic driver of change.

EXHIBIT 2. MEDICAL AFFAIRS IMPACT METRICS MATURITY LADDER



To ensure that your organization is on the right track and identify the next clear steps to this vision, consider where you currently stand on the maturity ladder of Medical Affairs (Exhibit 2). Leading Medical Affairs organizations are already moving beyond traditional productivity metrics, shifting the focus from activity to impact. By embedding these impact metrics into practice, Medical Affairs teams are better positioned to inform strategy, shape behavior, and elevate their influence within and beyond the organization.

Choosing your Tailored Set of Impact Metrics

When designed thoughtfully, impact metrics both validate the work already being done and also influence how that work is prioritized, communicated, and resourced. Choosing the right set of impact metrics to measure is just as important as the measurement itself. To ensure your impact metrics are strategic and robust, consider the following three core factors:

1. Relevance

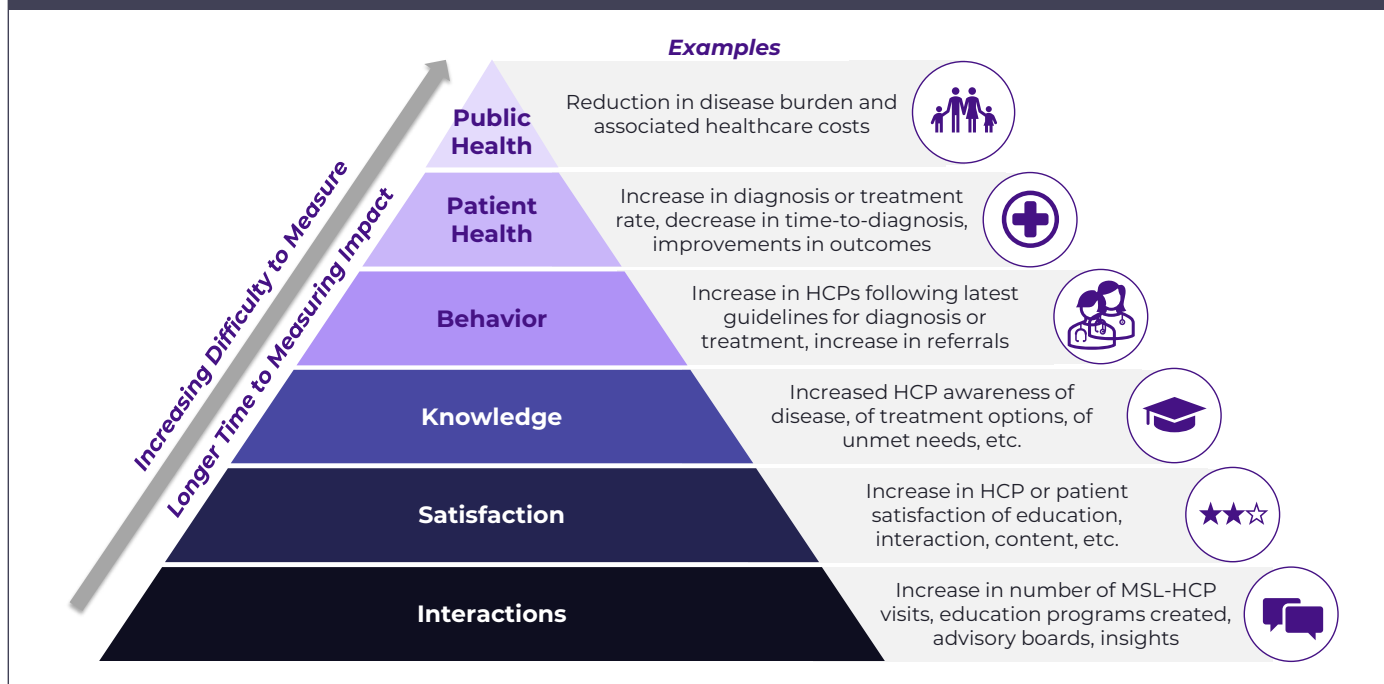
Your organization's strategic imperatives will serve as the foundation for identifying, prioritizing, and ultimately selecting relevant impact metrics to measure. A useful way to think about relevance is to consider the specific gaps your strategy aims to address – whether they relate to care delivery, scientific knowledge, or broader unmet needs. In many cases, a single impact metric may provide valuable progress insights that are directly relevant to several different strategic imperatives, serving as a powerful metric to invest in. These globally relevant constructs may even provide valuable data relevant to Commercial or Access colleagues as well. Thus, to reduce duplicate efforts and gain broader alignment, ensure your set of impact metrics directly ties back to your Medical Affairs strategy.

Another axis of relevance to consider is the timeframe from activity-to-measurement. Some outcomes take longer to materialize and may fall outside the planning horizon of your strategic cycle. In these cases, it is helpful to incorporate a balance of leading indicators (i.e., shorter-term measurements that appear quickly) and lagging indicators (i.e., longer-term measurements that signal more significant change). For example, if your strategic imperative is to close a particular care gap, that ultimate lagging indicator may take years to observe at a societal level fully. However, associated leading indicators – such as increased HCP knowledge on ways to address the care gap – can serve as credible proxies in the near term. When thoughtfully selected and logically connected, a combination of leading and lagging impact metrics enables teams to track progress, adjust course, and build a more complete picture of success over time.

2. Impact

Impact occurs at multiple levels (Exhibit³)². While impact metrics at the foundational levels (i.e., interaction, satisfaction) may not demonstrate real-world change on their own, they are often easier to track and yield quicker feedback from tactic to measurement and therefore serve as early, leading indicators of success. Mid-level impact metrics (i.e., knowledge, behavior) are crucial harbingers of real-world impact that may be feasible to monitor on a quarterly or annual basis. The highest tiers of impact (i.e., patient and public health) offer the most powerful validation of Medical Affairs's strategic role. However, they also require more time to manifest and greater investment to measure robustly.

EXHIBIT 3. LEVELS OF IMPACT OF MEDICAL AFFAIRS



Impact metrics can be powerful indicators of your strategic planning and tactical execution performance when chosen deliberately and thoughtfully. Medical Affairs leaders should challenge their team to move beyond what is familiar towards what is truly strategically relevant, and this will often mean aiming for higher levels of impact than what may feel comfortable. By having a well-balanced set of impact metrics that incorporate tracking of impact across multiple levels of impact, teams can be confident about their contribution to higher-level impact and, where required, course- correct in a timely fashion.

3. Feasibility












Understanding your organizational data infrastructure is a critical step to knowing exactly which impact metrics are within reach for your team and your organization. This will be a collaborative effort with your cross-functional colleagues across Medical, Commercial, Compliance, and Data Analytics, who may already be collecting valuable data that you can leverage. Whenever possible, building on or borrowing from existing resources helps avoid duplicating efforts and builds a new bridge to partners and closes an organizational silo. The act of collaboration can also foster early buy-in to the value of impact metrics and their insights across the organization, which may help improve resource allocation and data-driven decision-making.

There is a wide array of data sources that can be leveraged to support impact measurements today (Exhibit 4). Thoughtfully selecting and triangulating among these sources ensures a robust and tailored approach to measuring Medical Affairs' strategic impact. Start by exploring the data sources that are currently available to your organization and understand what other data sources – through vendors or partnerships – may serve to align with your impact metrics needs. It is important to aim high; do not underestimate what is possible to measure in today's landscape of increasingly sophisticated data, artificial intelligence, and data analytics.



Putting it Into Practice: Designing your Impact Metrics Framework

Putnam has supported clients at various stages of this transformation journey. Building on this extensive experience, we have developed a structured, stepwise approach that serves as a flexible framework. Recognizing that each organization's starting point, strategic priorities, and available resources differ, our five-step approach is designed to be adapted and tailored to individual client contexts, ensuring clarity, relevance, and measurable progress toward meaningful impact.

EXHIBIT 4. COMMON DATA SOURCES FOR IMPACT METRICS ASSESSMENT					
Level of Measurable Impact	Integrated Medical Insights	Primary Market Research	Claims / Administrative Data	External Registries	Electronic Medical Records
 Public Health					
 Patient Health					
 Behavior					
 Knowledge					
 Satisfaction					
 Interactions					
 Investment Needed	\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
<div>Suitability</div> <div>Low     High</div>					

In one recent engagement, we partnered with the Medical Excellence team of a global pharmaceutical company to introduce the concept of impact metrics and guide the development of their first tailored framework throughout a therapeutic area aligned to both their strategic priorities and existing data infrastructure (see case study panel).

Case Study: Evaluating Medical Impact of a Rare Diseases Function

Background | A global biopharmaceutical company engaged Putnam to develop a structured approach to evaluating the long-term impact of Medical Affairs activities across a select therapeutic area. This initiative was part of a broader internal transformation with ongoing organizational restructuring to establish Medical Excellence and cross-functional Data Analytics capabilities. Although the team had mature operational tracking in place, the client and the executive leadership recognized the need for a framework that could move beyond activity counts to measure meaningful enterprise-relevant impact on-par with Commercial colleagues.

Approach | Putnam supported the design and operationalization of an impact metrics framework tailored to the organization's Medical strategy and capabilities using the 5-step approach:



A highly collaborative approach was taken to ensure broader team engagement and buy-in. Central to the work were in-person workshops where cross-functional stakeholders collaborated to brainstorm, evaluate, and prioritize impact metrics based on relevance, feasibility and levels of impact, ensuring broad input and alignment. Seamless integration into the existing strategic and tactical plans was enabled by mapping prioritized impact metrics to available data sources and identifying internal and external partners to support execution of the impact metrics framework (see below).

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE	Strengthen HCP belief and comfort with adhering to guideline recommendations			Improve patient awareness and adherence to recommended treatment plan			Close population-level care gaps in disease X		
	Impact Metric	Source	Cadence	Impact Metric	Source	Cadence	Impact Metric	Source	Cadence
METRICS PLAN	Level: Patient Health			Level: Patient Health			Level: Patient Health		
	Increase in Number of Patients Staying on Therapy for 6+ months	Claims	Quarterly	Increase in Patient Adherence	Specialty Pharmacy	Quarterly	Increase in Disease X Diagnosis	Claims	Quarterly
		Specialty Pharmacy	Quarterly	Increase in # and % of Patients on Guideline Therapy	Claims	Quarterly	Increase in % of Patients with Disease X Receiving Treatment	Claims	Quarterly
	Level: HCP Behavior				Market Research	Biannually	Level: HCP Behavior		
	Decrease in Time from Initial Treatment to Escalation	Claims	Quarterly	Level: HCP Behavior			Increase in % of Routine Test X Ordered Within 6 Months of Initial Suspicion	Claims	Quarterly
		HCP Survey	Biannually	Increase in % of HCPs Initiating Newly Diagnosed Patients on Guideline Therapy	Claims	Quarterly		Physician PMR	Quarterly
	Level: HCP Knowledge			Level: HCP Knowledge			Level: HCP Knowledge		
	Increase in HCPs Knowing Correct Dosing Strategy	Training Surveys	Biannually	Increase in HCP Awareness and Motivation for Treatment Initiation and Escalation	Physician PMR	Quarterly	Increase in HCP Awareness of Disease X	Conference Metrics	Quarterly
	Level: Interactions				Physician Tx Decision Survey	Biannually		MSL Survey	Ongoing
	Increase in Number of HCPs Receiving Education on Guideline Update	CRM	Quarterly		MSL Survey	Ongoing			
		Conference Metrics	Quarterly						

Results | This engagement resulted in an actionable impact metrics framework tailored to the client's Medical strategy, planned tactics, and overall vision. For each impact metric, clear guidance on data source, method of measurement, and tracking cadence was provided. Several impact metrics could be immediately implemented, while others could easily be adapted based on ongoing or planned tactics.

Discussion | Beyond implementation readiness, this process oriented the various functions towards an impact-focused mindset, re-invigorating teams and fostering a culture of cross-functional openness and collaboration. By creating space for open conversations with 1-on-1 discussions and co-creation with cross-functional workshops, this process assuaged initial hesitancy around impact metrics and positioned it as a tool for strategic learning rather than individual performance. As a result, participants reported a +150% increase in the perception of metrics effectiveness owing to this process.

Practical Tips for Your Impact Metrics Journey

Across Putnam's experience with real-life integration of impact metrics, some common themes have emerged for Medical Affairs leaders and teams to think about when starting the journey:

For Leaders:

- **Establish a supportive environment for impact measurement**

The introduction of impact metrics can sometimes trigger defensiveness, particularly when teams perceive them as performance evaluations rather than strategic tools. This is especially true when the metrics aim to capture nuanced outcomes - such as closing care gaps that are inherently more complex than counting traditional activity metrics. Leaders play a critical role in reframing this narrative: impact metrics should be positioned not as a burden or judgment, but as a directional compass - designed to guide teams, illuminate progress toward strategic goals, demonstrate value, and ultimately strengthen the function's ability to drive meaningful change.

For Teams:

- **Develop impact metrics with strategy in mind**

Clearly define and align metrics to your strategic imperatives from the outset. Strategic imperatives set a clear focus and provide direction, helping teams select and prioritize impact metrics that directly measure progress toward meaningful goals.

- **Prioritize fewer, more meaningful metrics**

Focus on a concise set of strategically relevant metrics rather than attempting to measure everything. An impact metrics overload can reduce efficiencies by complicating decision-making and introducing unnecessary operational challenges. Prioritize a small set of impact metrics closely aligned to strategic imperatives, ensuring each clearly demonstrates value and informs meaningful decisions.

- **Keep metrics stakeholder-centric**

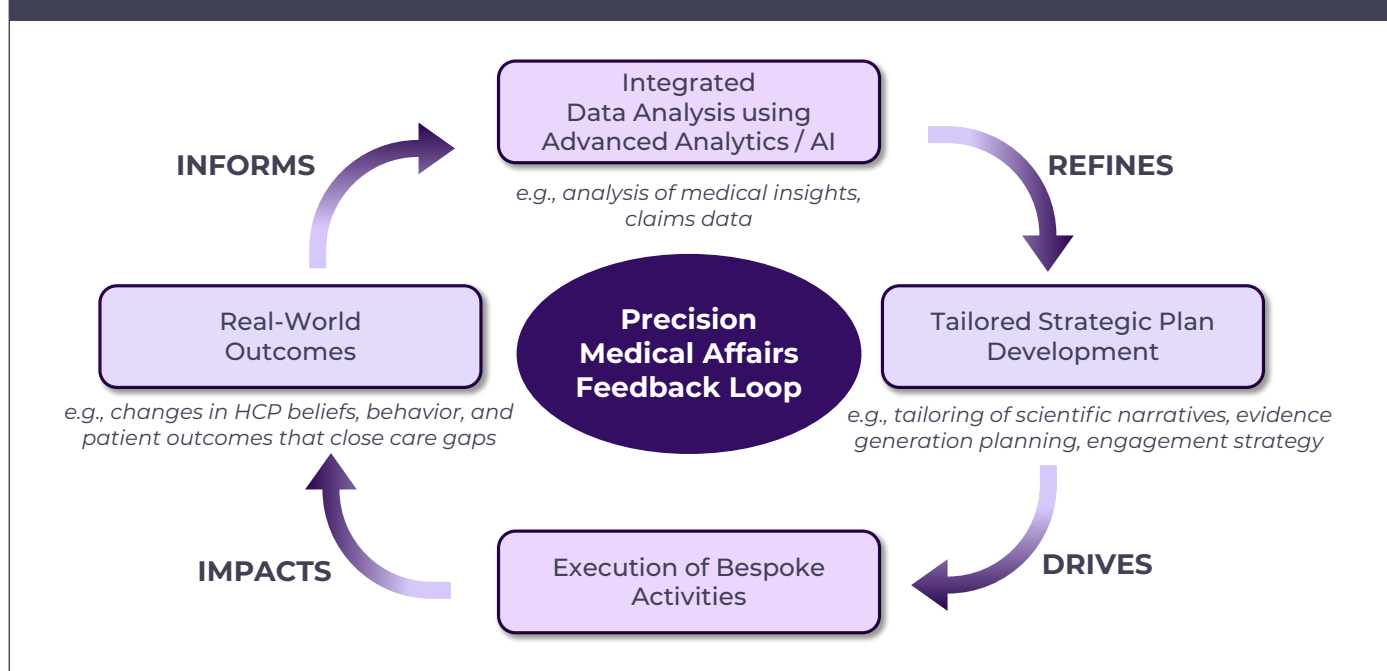
Clearly frame impact metrics around the value created for your key stakeholders at heart. Begin at the top of the impact pyramid (see Exhibit 3) by identifying a longer-term lagging indicator that addresses the most relevant outcomes such as improved patient outcomes, enhanced provider decision-making, or informed payer and policy choices. Then, move downward through the pyramid, defining the necessary intermediate actions and impact to determine leading indicators that align in the near term with the lagging indicator for a progressive view into team-driven impacts. This enables a strategic view of both progress and impact achievement over time, with interim results that can be shared with leaders and supporting stakeholders to improve patient care at large.

Future Trends and Vision for Medical Affairs Success

As Medical Affairs and its functions play a bigger role in shaping the overall organizational strategy and direction, metrics to measure the progress of Medical Affairs activities are increasingly emphasizing direct, quantifiable improvements in the real world. To achieve this, Medical Affairs teams will need to align on the key impact metrics that demonstrate success and integrate diverse datasets to measure closing of care gaps and alignment of real-world practice with optimal care standards. Future scorecards may also extend beyond patients and healthcare providers to reflect broader impacts, including health equity, improved access, and societal value.

The advent of advanced data analytics is enabling the creation and execution of impact metrics frameworks that are real-time and predictive. Advanced analytics, including generative AI, predictive modeling, and agentic AI, will be able to continuously synthesize internal and external data streams, actively guiding evidence generation and stakeholder engagement strategies supported by data. Dynamic feedback loops will enable proactive tracking, and rapid responses to emerging trends tailored to specific segmentations of stakeholders.

EXHIBIT 5. PRECISION MEDICAL AFFAIRS FEEDBACK LOOP



We envision these sophisticated data-driven, personalized strategic feedback loops to reflect the next stage of evolution in Medical Affairs called "Precision Medical Affairs" (see exhibit 5). At this stage, Medical Affairs teams will be equipped with advanced capabilities that can proactively identify care gaps, forecast outcomes, and autonomously suggest strategic adjustments.

To successfully prepare for and benefit from this transformation, we recommend proactively investing in strengthening their data infrastructure, fostering cross-functional analytics capabilities, and piloting AI-driven solutions. Early preparation in these areas will position organizations to fully capitalize on these emerging opportunities and confidently lead in the new era of Precision Medical Affairs.

Conclusion

As the responsibilities of Medical Affairs continue to advance, it is essential to refine how value is defined and demonstrated within the function. Impact metrics offer more than a measuring stick – they make the real-world outcomes of Medical Affairs leaders and teams visible. Notwithstanding, impact metrics also articulate Medical Affairs' contribution to asset success and continue to elevate Medical Affairs from an operational function to a strategic contributor. For Medical Affairs leaders looking to deepen their impact, the path to building an effective impact metrics framework begins not with perfection, but with intention and collaboration. Medical Affairs has always delivered value. Impact metrics ensure that the value is seen, understood, and recognized.

References

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